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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to test the assumption that intergroup contact will lead to changes in attitudes. The objectives were to assess the attitudes and perceptions held by Israelis regarding Egypt and Egyptians, and to evaluate the pattern of change occurring in these attitudes and perceptions following an intervention program and subsequent contact with Egyptians during a standard tour of their country. The subjects were 662 (Jewish) Israelis visiting Egypt on 16 organized tours. There were two groups--an experimental group which was exposed to programs designed to improve Israelis' perceptions of Egyptians and a control group which was not exposed. The results indicated that there were two factors included in the participants' attitudes: 1) a general attitude that included emotional reactions and cognitive evaluations, and 2) political reactions which included opinions concerning the nature and feasibility of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process. For the control group the changes in these attitudes as a consequence of contact with Egyptians showed a negative trend in the general attitude and no change in the political attitude. Regarding the Israelis' perception of the Egyptian, there was a negative change in the intellectual-competence aspect and a positive change in the personal-social dimension. The changes were congruent with the initial attitudes held by the participants. For the experimental group it was clear that the various programs to which they were exposed had a positive effect on their personal-social attitudes towards Egyptians. In this group again, however, the political attitudes were not significantly altered. A reference list and tables showing the attitude changes on a scale from 1-4 are included. (CG)

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COGNITIVE CULTURAL LEARNING, INTERGROUP CONTACT AND CHANGE IN ETHNIC ATTITUDES AND RELATIONS

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Research Objective and Background

The signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel has opened the way to personal contact never yet shared by these two peoples. After 31 years in a state of war, Israelis and Egyptians are meeting for the first time armed only with their conceptions and misconceptions of each other. The effects of their meeting--whether in hotels, streets, shops, offices or dinner parties--may have a decisive role in the future relations between these peoples.

Popular notions, social ideologies, and good-will programs generally view ethnic interaction in a positive light, founded on the belief that it promotes intergroup understanding. The assumption is that positive changes in attitude will at first occur among and towards the interacting members and will later generalize to the entire ethnic group. Thus, if only one had the opportunity to communicate with others and to appreciate their way of life, understanding and consequently a reduction of prejudice would follow. The same belief underlies some major national policy decisions such as integration in schools, housing projects, work situations, and the army.

The fact that some social scientists ~~and~~ policymakers accept interethnic contact as the main way of resolving conflict between ethnic groups is somewhat surprising. After all, there is enough evidence today to show that people prefer interaction with others who are similar to themselves. It has been shown that mere random labeling of a group makes a difference in preference and choice of individuals. Ethnic groups are definitely different from each other in one way or another. Even if we accept the notion that these differences are to a large extent assumed and not real, people will still prefer others who appear similar to themselves and will tend not to interact with those whom they perceive as different (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Byrne, 1969; Newcomb, 1961). Moreover, effective intergroup contact may be needed primarily when conflict or tension is present (otherwise, why bother). In <u>these</u> cases, overall differences between the groups--whether in status, belief, or perception--actually do exist. Why, then, should these groups wish to interact across ethnic lines and consequently change their intergroup attitudes and relations?

There is, indeed, much evidence that intergroup contact per se does not necessarily reduce tension or prejudice (Amir, 1976). At times, it

may even increase conflict and cause violent outbreaks and racial riots. It is thus argued (Bloom, 1971) that there is probably more casual interracial contact in South Africa than in most multiracial states, yet it would be a feat of irresponsibility to argue that race attitudes and behavior in South Africa are benign. Historical documentation of anti-Semitism in Europe, the attitude towards Blacks in the American South, or analysis of the communities in which ethnic riots broke out in the U.S. in the 1960s offer additional examples of contact which does not seem to have fostered friendly relations and mutual understanding. Thus, one thing that most social scientists in this field agree upon is that ethnic contact as such is not sufficient to produce positive changes in ethnic relations.

Still, a number of conditions involved in interethnic contact have been found by Amir (1969, 1976, 1977) and Cook (1962) to be especially potent in producing positive attitude change of interacting groups. And indeed, ways of action have been suggested with regard to planning existing intergroup contact situations or those that will probably occur in the near future in such a way that will facilitate optimal conditions for a positive attitude change, or producing intervention programs with the purpose of bringing together people from both national groups under positive conditions for change in ethnic relations.

The present study aims to produce such interventions in one area of ethnic contact between (Jewish) Israelis and Arabs which seems to be--presently and may be even in the future--the most frequent and extensive area of contact between Israelis and Arabs from neighboring countries, namely, interethnic contact while on sojourn in the other country. Specifically, this study will concentrate on (Jewish) Israelis and try to evaluate intervention programs carried out prior to or during their visit to Egypt and their interpersonal interaction with its residents. The intervention programs are geared to produce changes in ethnic attitudes and perceptions through manipulation of cognitive aspects and should, together with the intergroup contact of Israelis while visiting Egypt, yield optimal results. The evaluation will be in terms of these programs' potentiality to produce such changes in intergroup attitudes, perceptions and beliefs, and in the Israelis' willingness to accept the people of Egypt and their culture, and to continue and promote their social communication with them.

The possible significance of this study is threefold: (1) to develop new cognitive techniques for improving relations between ethnic groups in general, and between Israelis and Egyptians in particular; (2) to evaluate the contribution of these techniques in which the cognitive aspects provided are directly related to and integrated with the contact experience with that group in changing intergroup attitudes and relations; (3) to provide authorities and public agencies with new directions which can easily be applied in tourism to further intergroup understanding and enjoyment while touring foreign countries.

Method of Research

Subjects. The subjects were 662 (Jewish) Israelis visiting Egypt on 16 organized tours. Two types of groups were involved--an experimental group which was exposed to any of the programs and a control group which was not exposed to it. Both of these groups were visiting Egypt and were drawn from the same kind of population, some of them even going on the same tour, and were randomly divided into an experimental and a control group.

The intervention programs. Two programs were developed and evaluated. (Because of time limitations these interventions can only briefly be presented here. We may elaborate on them later, during the discussion period.) One program includes printed material, especially prepared and written for this purpose, which tries to portray Egypt and Egyptians in a favorable and balanced fashion, somewhat different from the typical stereotypical way Israelis perceive Egyptians. This material was presented to Israeli tourists before or at the start of their tour to Egypt. A second approach includes a special program which involves the Israeli tourist leaders to Egypt and their preparation to serve as socializing agents for a positive attitude change of the Israeli tourists visiting Egypt. A third technique, presently being developed, will be briefly referred to later, in the discussion section of our results.

Measures of the dependent variable: Change in ethnic attitude and perception. Questionnaires were developed to assess the possible change toward Egypt and Egyptians produced by the tour itself and by the intervention programs. These tools measure variables such as: ethnic stereotypes, cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of the ethnic attitude, willingness for exposure to and further contact with Egyptians, prospects for peace between the

countries and enjoyment of the tour. Measures previously developed by us in studies on intergroup relations between Arabs and Israelis (Amir, Ben-Ari, Bizman, & Rivner, 1982; Amir & Bizman, 1978; Amir, Bizman, Ben-Ari, & Rivner, 1980) were utilized. Two almost identical versions of these measures were developed, one for the "before" and one for the "after" stage; the only difference between them is the inclusion of a number of questions related to the tour included in the "after" measure only.

Procedure. The main study was preceded by an elaborate pilot stage. This stage involved four substages: (a) identifying and learning about variables in intergroup contact relevant to the tourist situation of Israelis in their encounter with Egypt and Egyptians. This phase of the study included: open interviews with Israelis having visited Egypt, with tourist guides and with experts on Egypt, and a number of trips of the research team on organized tours to Egypt; (b) consequently, preparing the intervention program, with the assistance of experts on Egypt and the Egyptian people, pretesting it, and then constructing its final version for the study; (c) building and pretesting the measures of the dependent variable, namely, measures of ethnic attitudes and relations and their change; (d) identifying tourist groups for the study and its aims. The main phase of the research comprised administering the "before" measures to the experimental and control groups, implementing the intervention programs for the experimental groups, and administering the "after" measures. The "before" measures were administered during the bus ride from Israel to the Egyptian border. The "after" measures were applied immediately upon the completion of the tour.

The data are being analyzed in terms of changes produced by the tour to Egypt itself, as well as the effectiveness of the intervention programs in yielding "additional" changes in ethnic attitudes and relations of Israelis towards Egypt and Egyptians.

RESULTS

Attitudes and Perceptions of Israelis regarding Egypt and the Egyptians

The first part of our study sought to assess the attitudes and perceptions held by Israelis regarding Egypt and Egyptians, and to evaluate the pattern of change occurring in these attitudes and perceptions following contact with Egyptians during a standard tour to their country.

The results indicated that both the attitudes and the perceptions were not unidimensional. Two independent factors were clearly discerned in the Israelis' attitude: A general attitude towards Egypt that included emotional reactions and cognitive evaluations (such as interesting, dirty, efficient), etc; and a politically oriented attitude that included opinions concerning the nature and feasibility of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process (such as: a peaceful coexistence between the two countries is implausible).

The perception of the Israeli towards the Egyptian comprised two clear factors: a personal-social dimension of the Egyptian (such as polite, friendly, honest, pleasant, etc.) and an intellectual-competence aspect (intelligent, efficient, etc.). These two factors were also found for the Israelis' comparison between themselves and the Egyptians.

The changes in these attitudes and perceptions as a consequence of the Israelis' contact with Egypt and Egyptians during their visit to Egypt are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

As can be seen from Table 1, there was a negative change in the general attitude of the Israelis towards Egypt and no change in the political attitude. Regarding the Israeli's perception of the Egyptian, there was a negative change in the intellectual-competence aspect and a positive change in the personal-social dimension. The results for the comparison questionnaire revealed the same pattern of change.

The common denominator underlying all of the obtained changes was that the direction of change was congruent with the initial attitude held by the respondents. When the initial attitude or perception was positive, the direction of change was positive; in contrast, a negative initial attitude/perception produced a change in a negative direction.

Changes in the Israelis' Attitudes and Perceptions Following Various Interventions

The major aim of our project was to assess the effects of various interventions on change of attitudes or perceptions. Two types of intervention programs were compared: One program comprised an information booklet which was distributed to groups of visitors prior to their trip to Egypt;

the second group received, in addition to the booklet, a tourist guide who was especially trained for the purposes of the study.

Table 2 presents the mean change scores on each of the factors in the two intervention groups as well as in a control group that received no intervention. (The change score was defined as the difference between the "before" and "after" measures.)

Insert Table 2 about here

As can be seen in Table 2, the change was clearly affected by the employed interventions. In all those aspects where a change occurred (excluding the political attitude aspect which has not changed significantly also in the control group), it was in congruence with the interventions and in the following direction: As compared to the two intervention groups, the control group changed relatively more in a negative direction. The booklet and guide intervention was successful in producing positive changes in the personal-social aspect of the attitude towards the Egyptians and in preventing negative changes in all other aspects. The influence of the booklet alone was more moderate, albeit still significant in comparison to the control group. Identical results were obtained using F tests with repeated measures.

The effects of background variables

F tests with repeated measures were employed in order to assess possible effects of various background variables such as sex, family origin, and education on attitude change. No significant results were obtained regarding any of the variables. In addition, we tested to what extent the differential changes of the intervention groups were related to the general satisfaction of the visitors with their trip, which may reflect some kind of a "halo effect" of the trip's atmosphere. Yet, no correlation between the degree of trip satisfaction and each of the above variables was found. Moreover, the three groups did not differ in the degree of their satisfaction from the trip.

Discussion

There is a widespread popular notion that intergroup (and, in our case, international) contact per se will inevitably lead to a change in the mutual attitudes held by the interacting groups and improve their relationships. According to this notion, contact among individual members of different groups creates conditions conducive to mutual acquaintance and positive attitude change. This approach has provided the foundation for policy decisions and applied projects in the areas of housing, work and education. On the international scene it fostered various international meetings within the frameworks of student exchanges, sport contests, conventions, etc.

The present study tested this idea in the area of international tourism. Similarly to other studies, we found that the strong belief in this approach must be qualified; intergroup contact per se does not guarantee positive attitude change. Thus, the results obtained in the control (contact per se) groups were multidirectional: In some aspects of attitude or perception there was no change, in some the changes were positive, and in still others negative changes took place.

A question of interest concerns the differential findings obtained in the various aspects of attitude change. As noted earlier, the direction of all the changes was congruent with the direction of the initial attitude and perception. The initial attitude in the personal-social domain was positive and the change was in the direction of enhanced positivity. In contrast, the initial attitude in the intellectual-competence domain was negative, and the direction of change in this domain was also negative. Likewise, in the attitudes towards Egypt, which included primarily intellectual-competence aspects, the initial attitude as well as the attitude change were negative. These findings somewhat parallel those of Bizman and Amir (1982) who found that the Israelis "agree that they excel intellectually rather than socially, while the opposite holds true for the Arabs and that the Israelis emphasize their intellectual advantage, while the Arabs emphasize their social superiority."

It is possible that the differential pattern of change in the various dimensions reflected an accentuation of the Israelis' feeling of superiority in the intellectual domain and their relative "weakness" in social aspects. It may be that the Israeli allows himself to change his perception about the

Egyptian in what he perceives as a "less important" domain--the personal-social, while simultaneously increasing the gap between himself and the Egyptian in the "more important" domain--the intellectual-competence.

Another possibility is that the change constitutes simply a reinforcement of the initial attitude. The Israeli tourist perceives the Egyptian reality through the lenses of his initial attitude and is consequently biased in the direction of his initial attitude. And, of course, there remains the possibility that the Israeli is not a reality-distorter, but a realist and the direction of change in his attitudes and perceptions indeed reflects the reality he encounters. The Israeli visitor to Egypt is exposed throughout his trip to appalling poverty, a backward way of life, and widespread inefficiency. All these are likely to lead to the attribution of retardation in the competence of the Egyptians.

On the other hand, as a tourist the Israeli is in frequent contact with service personnel who are polite, accommodating, and pleasant. Thus, he is positively impressed by the personal and social characteristics of the population he meets.

It is difficult to determine which of the above alternatives causes the changes in the Israelis' attitudes towards the Egyptians. Clearly, each explanation has its unique implication and suggests different possibilities for future interventions.

In line with Miller's (1980) recommendation that "intergroup contacts must occur under circumstances that are likely to promote positive intergroup relations and create an appreciation of diverse cultures," our study sought to assess the effects of two interventions designed to alter the conditions under which contact takes place in a manner assumed to increase the probability of achieving positive results. The two interventions we employed attempted to change the cognitive set of the Israeli visitors towards Egypt and the Egyptians, one by means of written material (a booklet) and the second by means of that written material as well as an especially trained tourist guide. We assumed, naturally, that the second form would be more effective, since it was a multi-method intervention that was present throughout the tour, as opposed to the booklet alone that was probably read at the beginning of the trip only.

Both types of intervention were indeed effective in positively changing the attitudes and perceptions of the Israelis towards Egypt and the

Egyptians. Furthermore, the most positive change occurred in the booklet and guide group, but even in the booklet-alone group a moderate, but still positive change took place. ~~less~~ The least change and even ~~damages~~ changes in a negative direction were obtained in the control group. It should be noted that even when the intervention was not strong to induce positive changes, it at least succeeded in preventing negative ones. Similar findings were lately found in another study on attitude change in ethnic relations (Ben-Ari, 1982). It thus appears that early planning and preparation increase the probability that intergroup contact, even between groups that were in a stage of prolonged and fierce conflict and war, may induce positive changes in attitudes and perceptions of members of the interacting groups towards each other.

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Table 1

Mean Attitude Scores of Control Group Israelis towards Egypt and Egyptians, Before and After Tour

Factor	Period	Before	After	p	Direction of change (towards Egypt and Egyptians)
Attitude towards Egypt	General attitude	2.81*	3.13	.001	Negative
	Political attitude	2.10*	2.07	---	---
Perception of Egyptians	Intellectual-competence aspect	2.49*	2.74	.001	Negative
	Personal-social aspect	1.75*	1.57	.001	Positive
Comparison between Israelis and Egyptians	Intellectual-competence aspect	1.97**	1.70	.001	Negative
	Personal-social aspect	3.59**	3.84	.001	Positive

*Answers range from 1 (positive) and 4 (negative), with a mean of 2.5.

**Answers range from 1 (Israeli more positive than Egyptian) and 5 (Egyptian more positive than Israeli), with a mean of 3 (Israeli and Egyptian are similar).

Table 2

Mean Change Scores of the Israelis' Attitudes and Perceptions in the Three Groups

Factor	Group	Control group	Booklet group	Booklet & guide group	p
Attitude towards Egypt	General attitude	-0.31*	-0.08	+0.07	.001
	Political attitude	+0.04	+0.17	+0.13	n.s.
Perception of Egyptians	Intellectual-competence aspect	-0.24	-0.08	+0.06	.001
	Personal-social aspect	+0.17	+0.33	+0.41	.004
Comparison between Israelis and Egyptians	Intellectual-competence aspect	-0.24	-0.06	+0.07	.001
	Personal-social aspect	+0.25	+0.26	+0.45	n.s.

*A change score with a - sign indicates a negative change towards Egypt or Egyptians, a + sign--a positive change.